

*This supersedes my previous comment.

I fully support the FCC's Notice of Proposed Rule Making and Order regarding eliminating the Morse code Element 1 exam for Amateur Radio High-Frequency licenses.

Being a 19 year-old no-code Technician class operator, ARRL Life Member, and a member of No-Code International, I am amazed at the sorry state that Amateur Radio is in today where some people would have us continue to live in the past. Requiring people to have to learn Morse code over all of the other modes that this hobby can provide and then not requiring them to use this mode after the exam is truly nonsensical and illogical! If this were indeed the case, many amateurs would fail outright! This clearly violates our mandated objective of "continuing the advancement of the radio art."

Many commenters request that the FCC retain the Morse code requirement be retained solely for the Amateur Extra Class license to ensure trained operators in emergency communications. As to how this would be in the best interest of the hobby or be beneficial to emergency communications is unclear. In my mind, the Amateur Radio service would still be in the same position it is now except for the fact that we might have more HF licensed operators who supposedly will not know Morse code. To me, this is the better state to be in for we will have more operators with technical expertise. For those of you who actually are able to grasp the FCC rules and regulations regarding emergency situations, you will know that in these situations one is JUSTIFIED in using ALL resources at one's disposal. This of course means that the "distinction" between someone who may or may not know Morse code and someone with Morse code in their "portfolio of operating skills" is absolutely MEANINGLESS! (As of course is ANNUALLY DEMONSTRATED in the nationwide ARRL Field Day!)

It can be argued that Morse code is indeed an effective mode of communication, but so are other modes, and it is by no means a GUARANTEED mode. Being a short-wave listener, I can assure you that it too is susceptible to both interference and fading, just like any other mode.

One point made by many people is that Morse code has been instrumental in saving countless lives such as is the case in emergency communications. I am in no way denying this at all, this being one of Morse code's strengths: being very simplistic. However, this raises some very interesting questions.

- 1) *Why is it that if one wishes to join the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) or any other emergency aid group, one is not required to take a Morse code exam?* I myself am a member of my local ARES group and truly treasure the experiences I have had with it.

Now in regards to some of my fellow commenters, I find it fascinating that although they state that the future of emergency communications is in danger, they are apparently incapable of either checking their spelling or staying to a main point and meander into totally unrelated comment and sometimes making their comment indecipherable to anyone else. Now, it is my understanding that this is a FEDERAL website from which anyone in the general public has the means to view the comments posted from those concerned. It is my belief that if we are to represent Amateur Radio, we should have greater standards for our postings here on such a CRITICAL matter with huge consequences for the future of our beloved hobby.

- 2) ***If we are to continue with this out-dated requirement, why not begin administering spelling and grammar tests to applicants?*** I in no way find this question unreasonable. In my ARES training, I have learned that it is not the medium of communication which is most important in emergency communications but the content of the message you are passing on. To be the most efficient, any message needs to be to the point and carefully thought out before being sent. One misspelled or missing word could indeed mean the difference between life and death and should by no means be taken lightly! Perhaps the question we should be asking is not whether Morse code should be a requirement but rather those of us who participate in emergency communications are in fact able to articulate a useful message?

Now, onto perhaps my favorite reason to preserve the REQUIREMENT of Morse code: The HAM bands will no longer be the peaceful haven for all of the old-timers and that without the Morse code requirement, the bands will soon be rampant with “the general scum of the earth,” taking up way too much spectrum, and not using Morse code. Many questions come to mind, a few not appropriate for general public browsing. A few of the main ones are:

- 1) ***HUH?!?!?***
- 2) ***Exactly how are you going to be able to discern between the idiot operators already out there and the “CB quality” operators that are bound to come out of the woodwork?*** I suppose that operators will start demanding that each other show Morse code proficiency before continuing with their conversations... (That’ll be the day!)
- 3) ***Why hasn’t this ALREADY happened?*** What part of International Morse Code don’t you people understand? As those whose arguments to keep the Morse code have already pointed out, it is a code that knows no language barriers. But based on some desperate pleas that the Morse code does remain, you come to the impression that they believe that it is some kind of

“secret code.” Now, if I am not mistaken, the FCC does not allow the use of “secret codes” in the Amateur Radio service, that all transmission types are to be public knowledge in the public domain. As to how Morse code is a significant hurdle to those “evil geniuses” among us is beyond me but I’m sure that those who bring up the argument have been working on it for much longer than I.

In the end, I am definitely not opposed to using Morse code whatsoever. But the main reason why we need to do away with it as a requirement is simple: It is no longer a “gateway” mode in that it is acting as a filter rather than a point of curiosity. With my generation advancing into the age of the internet where instant messaging and file sharing are now the “norm,” how is Morse code alluring to us? I would have thought that when the “@” was recently added to the list of symbols used in Morse code, some people would have had an epiphany! Morse code has long been associated with Amateur Radio and that image will not soon go away because we have continued to drag our feet. What is now needed desperately for this hobby is to associate it with the new digital modes such as packet and the different types of digital file transfer of which I personally love to copy! These are the new “gateway” modes. Quite frankly, Morse code isn’t sexy to us.

It is my belief that once this requirement is abolished, interest in Morse code will flourish because there will no longer be the added stress of having it as a test requirement. People will be able to learn it at the speed of their choosing because everyone’s brain is different from anyone else.

Morse code is just another mode. The ARRL will continue to broadcast practice sessions on the airwaves and people will continue to get their cute little code-proficiency certificates and they will put them on the refrigerator door, thus telling the world they know “the code.” Life will go on! Civilization might end but this WILL NOT be the reason!

Enough of my rantings! Onto the next post!